

BRIGADIER-GENERAL GEORGE PEREIRA'S JOURNEY TO LHASA

By the kindness of Major-General Sir Cecil Pereira we are allowed to publish the following account of his brother's remarkable journey from China to Lhasa and thence to India, extracted from letters received in the last few months.—ED. G. J.

GENERAL GEORGE PEREIRA left Tangar on 11 May 1922 with eight horses and twenty mules, his boy, six men, and four soldiers. He travelled up the Sining valley, seeing a few Chinese villages, passed Shara Kuto 27 miles from Tangar, and shortly afterwards crossed the Jih-yueh range, the geographical boundary between China and Tibet, though the present political boundary is the Tang-la range running east and west south-west of Jyekundo. In this area he met Chinese, Tibetans, and mounted Mongols. The altitude was about 11,000 feet. With the exception of lamas all the inhabitants are nomads who tend their flocks, and there are small patches of cultivation. The country consists of grass plains traversed by mountain ranges. Hares, marmot, chicao, and lizards were seen. Sheep, chickens, and eggs could be bought. At distances varying from 12 to 20 miles to the north ran the Koko range south of the lake of the same name.

Gunga Nor was reached on May 15, and in the surrounding plain there were herds of horses and cattle apparently untended, though occasional Tibetan tents were seen. The route continued across the same plain, scrub and grass covered, and watered by two streams. General Pereira had gone ahead of his caravan and spent a chilly and foodless night in the open owing to the caravan losing its way, and he did not find them until the following morning. On May 19 he crossed the Hu-ka-ya-hu Pass, 12,000 feet, and then descended to the Ta-ho, where he found a Chinese company of sixty to seventy Mohammedan soldiers. In this valley he saw the first trees since leaving the Sining valley.

Two days later there was a heavy snowstorm and his mules broke down, unable to stand the severe climate with very poor grazing at times, and he was compelled to return to Ta-ho-pa to hire extra transport and an escort, as Golok raiding parties were reported in the neighbourhood. Though the military use mule transport, as their mules are fit and they travel with light loads rapidly across areas where the grazing is poor, on the journey mules were not found satisfactory and were the cause of constant delays. Yaks are slow but sure.

The big Cha-su-ra Pass (14,607 feet) was crossed on May 25. There was snow on the plain beyond, and in the evening a strong west wind. The following day a view was obtained of the Amn'e Machin peak in the far distance to the south-east; it was seen from an altitude of 13,000

feet, and it must be well over 25,000 feet as it towers above everything around. On May 28 he passed Tong-ri-tsonak (lake) (on maps shown as Tos-sun Nor), and he camped near a big company of Tibetans with six hundred yaks. These were the first inhabitants he had seen since leaving Ta-ho-pa; they were very friendly. As these Tibetans were bound for Jyekundo he travelled the next stage with them.

On June 2 he reached the Hwang-ho (Yellow River), and forded it where it was 2 to 2½ feet deep and 30 yards wide. From here on there were many Tibetan camps with yaks and sheep and good grazing until Ch'a-la-tu camp, 14,802 feet, was reached on June 9.

The following day he crossed the Ch'a-la-ping plateau, over 15,000 feet, and on June 12 the Ya-kou Pass (15,439 feet), the highest point on the route; shortly afterwards the Ch'a-ho, the headwaters of the great Yalung River, was crossed. He reached Chu-chieh monastery (in Tibetan Ju-chieh Gomba) on June 17, nearly 450 miles from Tangar. The monastery contains about a hundred lamas of the Red sect. With the exception of mud barracks at Ta-ho-pa and Ch'a-pu-ch'a and the small villages near it, this was the first building seen since entering Tibet.

On June 18 he camped at Kana Monastery (two hundred lamas), and on June 20 at Hsiu Gomba, reaching Jyekundo on June 23, 518 miles from Tangar.

Before leaving Jyekundo on July 10 he sold nearly all his mules and horses and hired twenty-three "ula" yaks.

The first day's journey crossed the Ba-tang plateau (13,798 feet), after a climb of nearly 2000 feet. There were continuous climbs and descents into valleys with Tibetan camps, good grazing, and many flowers. He crossed the Sing-nak-ri-ya ridge, which rises to a height of 15,724 feet and is the divide between the Yang-tse and Mekong rivers. The country was practically devoid of trees. Rats (ara), marmots, hares, and gazelle were seen.

The general trend of the country in this part made the route a succession of precipitous climbs and descents over rocky tracks and occasionally across marshy places; then it led through beautiful grassy valleys with good grazing and many flowers. There were occasional Tibetan camps with flocks taking advantage of the good grazing; some downpours of rain and at times high winds that threatened to blow away the tents. To add to the discomforts, loads occasionally fell off the yaks when they were fording streams, with the result of wet clothing and blankets.

On July 12 he passed Rashi Gomba, a monastery of a thousand monks with a fine gold roof in the centre of the temple. The following day he crossed the valley of the Lung Chu (Wind River) and traversed some fir and bush tracts, the first tree region he had seen in Tibet excepting the Ta-ho-pu valley. He passed a Chinese caravan of twenty mules that had left Lhasa forty-five days previously. The Dze Chu (east

branch of the Mekong) was 80 yards wide with a very strong current, and is crossed in a coracle managed by a single paddle ; transport animals have to swim.

The " ula," the system of hiring yak transport by the stage, was found to be extremely well organized and a great improvement on buying mules and ponies for the journey. Tibetan villages, like Chinese, are run by a headman who is responsible for the provision of " ula."

Kanda was reached on July 15. It is a small village on the Mekong, or Dza Chu. Teichman's route had been followed so far (see *Geogr. Journal* map, January 1922). Kozloff's, Rockhill's, and Bower's routes were all crossed further ahead.

The Mekong (Dza Chu), passed on the 16th, was 200 yards wide ; there was only one coracle available and the animals swam, the yaks being encouraged by being pelted with stones. These river crossings were always lengthy proceedings.

The China-Tibet frontier was crossed on July 22 before reaching Tang-kwa, the route leaving the Tibetan kingdom of Nang-chen, which is under Chinese rule, and entering territory governed from Chamdo.

At this period there was constant rain ; the route was constantly up and down stony hills, with many streams to be crossed and hardly ever a bridge. The villages are extremely small, two to seven houses, the houses built of mud and wattle, with plank floors and log roofs which very often leak. The windows occasionally have wooden shutters or merely a wooden framework, but without paper coverings as the Chinese have. Chamdo was reached on July 28, about 260 miles from Jyekundo and nearly 800 from Tangar.

Officials reported that the season had been abnormally wet, and that the Ngom Chu had not been so high for thirty years : it was now an impetuous torrent. Since leaving the China-Tibet frontier the country had been well bridged. Some of the bridges were remarkably well built and rested on stone piers which withstood the great force of the rapidly flowing rivers : a vast improvement on the rope bridges of western Szechwan. The bridge across the Ngom Chu near Chamdo consists of five piers each about 22 feet square ; the piers have an outer casing of wood and are filled with stones, and the roadway is supported by cantilevers.

Chamdo is a dirty little village on low ground on the narrow strip of ground between the Dza Chu and the Ngom Chu, which unite here and form the Mekong. To the north of the village are the ruins of the great Chamdo monastery destroyed in 1912 during the fighting between the Chinese and Tibetans ; part of it has been restored recently.

General Pereira was delayed at Chamdo until he had permission to proceed to Lhasa, and he started on September 6 with the following retinue : his Chinese boy, a half-caste muleteer that he had engaged at Tangar, a Chinese with a fluent knowledge of Tibetan, and one Tibetan

sent by the Drepon who is the representative of the Dalai Lama in Chamdo. He had a "ula" of eighteen yaks and six horses. On September 10 he crossed the Mu La, 15,667 feet, the Mekong-Salween divide. The Tibetans, unlike the Chinese, are very good at local geography; they know what rivers the streams run into, and the names of places, whereas the Chinese are grossly ignorant of these details.

After leaving Jung-erh on September 11 he saw about 40 miles to the south a great snow-clad range called the Tu-re-la, the only thoroughly snow-covered range seen so far, with the exception of the big Amne Machin mountain.

The weather was fine after leaving Chamdo and tents were not used, as a room in a house was generally available.

Denchin was reached on September 14, the chief official here being called the Ken-jung, who has the same rank as the Drepon at Chamdo.

The Salween (in Tibetan Gia-mo-ngui Chu) was reached on September 16; its position is incorrectly marked on maps. The following day he crossed it in coracles. His two private horses had now swum the Yang-tse, Mekong, and Salween, and had forded the Yellow and Yalung rivers, no mean equine record.

He got to Shobando on September 18, and was on the main road to Lhasa described by Abbé Huc. September 24 he reached Urjien Tanda and crossed the Shiar-gung La, 16,528 feet, with 2 to 3 feet of snow at the top. It has the reputation of being one of the worst passes on the road, and the track is very steep and rocky. The mountains round were all snow covered, possibly from a recent fall. This is the divide of the Salween and Tsang Po.

Three days later he journeyed up the beautiful Nok Chu defile with magnificent views between the hills, which rise about 2000 feet above the river. The valley-sides are covered with trees, chiefly firs, and he passed through many delightful woods. The Nok Chu is a foaming torrent 30 yards wide, which was crossed twice by bridges.

On the 28th he passed a caravan of 150 horses bound from Batang to Lhasa. This and the following days he had to camp out, on the 29th at a height of over 15,000 feet, and extremely cold. He had on the 29th crossed the Nur-gung La, which he estimated to be 16,800 feet; unfortunately spirit for his boiling-point thermometer had run out. This pass, he considers, excels the Shiar-gung La in difficulty, the track being if possible steeper and consisting of large and slippery boulders.

October 2 he crossed the Banda La (Archa Pass of the Indian map); he estimated the height as 16,200 feet, the third highest pass on the road. He soon after got a fine view of the beautiful Adza Lake of light blue colour among the snow-covered mountains. The only inhabitants seen were a few nomads.

On October 3 the Tro La was crossed, and the height of the pass was estimated at 16,050 feet; the going was better and easier than that of the

previous passes, but the zigzag ascent was very steep and the top of the pass was covered with snow. This was the last of the very high passes. The description "easier" is only comparative, as the tracks over the pass and through valleys abound with large rocks and the cold at high altitudes is always very great. In addition there is the constant crossing of streams which also have their full share of boulders.

To the west of the Tro La he passed some square towers 35 to 40 feet in height, which were built when the Jung-yer Mongols or Eleuths were powerful and raided from the Koko Nor district. They were crushed by the Emperor Chien Lung, who banished them to Chinese Turkestan, where a tract of country is still known as Jungaria, and General Pereira met some of their descendants when shooting in the T'ien Shan some years ago.

Giamda was reached on October 6, a comparatively large village of forty families, of which seventeen were Chinese. The day was sunny and the scenery lovely, the evergreens mingling with the yellow tints of the autumn. There were many flowers. It was possible to get eggs and potatoes, a great luxury.

Inner Tibet is essentially a country of high mountains and deep valleys. At this time of year, except at great heights, the weather is as mild as in England in autumn, with sun most days, and there had hardly been a drop of rain since leaving Chamdo.

On October 11 he crossed the last pass of the journey, the Gungbu Ba La, height estimated as 15,300 feet, by far the easiest pass on the whole road. On October 14 his thirty-fourth stage took him to Mé-jo-kung-gar. The character of the country now changed, and he traversed a broad flat valley; the enclosing hills were lower, 500 to 800 feet, with grass and scrub and practically no trees.

On October 17 he completed the thirty-seventh and last stage and entered Lhasa, 670 miles from Chamdo, 6360 from Peking, of which over 3500 had been traversed on foot. He was the first European to enter Lhasa from China since the celebrated Abbé Huc in 1845.

Explanation of numerals on the accompanying map.

The following are some of the more important notes given, at the places indicated by the figures, on General Pereira's MS. map of his route from which the accompanying sketch-map was taken:

1. Jih-yueh Shan (Sun Moon Range) is the boundary range between Kansu and Chinghai.
2. Chu-ri or Chi-da Pass (in Chinese A-mo).
3. Gunga Nor (Egg Lake) or Yün-Kai (fresh water).
4. Tong-ri-tso-nak (Lake of 1000 hills). In Mongol Butter Lake; on maps Tossun Nor.
5. Ngo-ring Tso in Tibetan means Blue Long Lake. The Mongol name is unknown.
6. In Tibetan Ma Chu, or Mother of Rivers.

7. Kya-ring Tso in Tibetan means Grey Long Lake. The Mongol name Tsaring Nor is unknown.
8. Ch'a-la Ya-K'ou (Pass) is on the Hwang Ho-Yangtze watershed.
9. Ch'a-la Shan. The Mongol names Baian-tukmu and Baian-Kara are unknown.
10. Jyekundo contains 240 families (200 Tibetan and 40 Chinese). There is a garrison of 70 Chinese cavalry, with 130 around in small detachments. The name Jyekundo or Jyeku in Tibetan, Chiehku in Chinese, officially Yüshuhsien, meaning Jade Tree City, from Tibetan name of district Yül-shul, meaning "country formed." Kansu Chinese pronounce it Yü-fu. It is inhabited by the 25 Ga-ba tribes, the district extending north to the Ch'a-la Shan.
11. 80 yards wide, deep and muddy, with strong current.
12. A note here states that the use of Mongol names is a great error. There are Mongols around Koko Nor (Blue Lake), and this Mongol name is therefore correct, the Chinese using Chinghai, which also means blue lake. Gunga Nor, a Mongol word, is also near where Mongols live. Further south there are now no Mongols, and such Mongol names as Tossun (it apparently should be To-su, meaning butter) Nor, Baian-tokmu for the great range, Oring Nor, etc., are entirely unknown to any Tibetan or Chinese. Amné Machin (pronounced by the Tibetans Anyé Mächin) is the only Mongol name known to inhabitants. The Chinese name for this mountain is Ma-hi Hsüeh Shan.
13. Jung-erh (Rockhill's Mer Jong). Rockhill evidently took the name Mer Jong from Meru, name of the district, and Jong for Jung-erh.
14. Ngenda is Rockhill's Nyulda. It is placed too far north on the maps.
15. Denchin is Rockhill's Nar-pei-hu. The route from Denchin to Shobando has never been traversed before by a white man.
16. Shobando (officially Shumdo), an important place, with roads running north to link up with Nagchuka and Jyekundo, main road to Lhasa and Chando, and south a road by Poyul to Kala.
17. Dhari-guo (pronounced Lharin-guo, Lhari meaning Mountain of Spirits. It is the Lharugo Giachug of the Indian map, and is an important place, as the small road from Denchin comes here down the De Chu valley. The Indian map wrongly shows it as going to Sa-chu-ka. The De Chu is an important and deep river 30 yards wide.
18. As usual, streams change their names below a junction; for instance, Tro Chu becomes successively U Chu, Niem Chu, and Jya Chu at Giamda. Below its junction with the Si-arp Chu it is called the Güng-bu Zong Chu.
19. It is doubtful whether natives consider the Tsang-po Chu as the main branch of the Tsangpo, but in any case the pronunciation of the two names is the same. The Indian map calls it the Kyi Chu; everywhere the natives call it the Tsang-po Chu. At Lhasa the official name is Kyi Chu.
20. The Güng-bu district (Kong-bo of Indian map) extends from the Güng-bu Ba La on the west to Giamda, and thence south-east to Tsé-la-gong on the Tsang-po.